



(Photo: Wayne County; David Johnson)

FALL COLOR REPORT 10/27/16

Northwest

This may be the last best week to see fall color in northwest IL. Many trees like walnut and cottonwood have shed their leaves. Oaks, hickories, and maples really stand out on the landscape. Oaks are red to russet brown, hickories are golden bronze, and maples are glowing yellow. Burning bush is flaming red as you drive through the cityscape. Some trees are still green, certainly cedar that stays green year round, and this is a nice contrast to the oaks, hickories, and maples.

Quad Cities: Rock Island, Henry, Bureau, Mercer, Stark, and Knox counties fall color is progressing rapidly now, but still green and yellowish green are dominant; brownish yellow is becoming more apparent; roadsides are losing leaves, but the scarlet from sumac and grayish burgundy from dogwoods persists in remaining leaves; the pinkish purple and maroon colors of ash and red maple are probably peaking now; some oaks are starting to change, but mostly yellowing. Sugar maples will be peaking this week with yellow and pinkish orange. Rain and wind may wash out some of the color from those trees that changed earlier this fall.

Northeast

In the woods in Grundy County, the black oaks are in full color. White oaks are still turning brown and leaves are falling from both groups. Hard maples are turning yellow, but still have long way to go. Soft maple are showing yellow leaves which are falling. Vines are also in full color. No heavy frost yet in northeast Illinois, so many ground cover plants/grasses still green. In the urban areas, maple and pear cultivars are 75% red. Locust and remaining live ash (autumn purple) are at 50%. White pines have lost inner needles and look fully green. Burning bush is 75% deep red, as well. Without a hard frost, fall color has been slow to show brilliance. Many trees will have dropped more than half their leaves before a killing frost arrives.

West Central

Fall color report for Pike, Adams, Scott, Calhoun, Brown, Jersey, Greene, and Macoupin counties: Cottonwood, sycamore, walnut, silver maple, and catalpa are yellowing/browning and losing leaves; most sassafras, dogwood, and sugar maple have hit their fall color peaks (red/yellow/orange/gold); most of the ash have also hit their color peaks (red/purple/yellow); most of the sumac and Creeper vines have hit their color peaks as well (red/orange); some hickory are yellowing; most oak and other species are just starting to turn in color, but are still predominantly green at the current time. Overall peak colors should be this week and weekend. Great area color drives include the River Road - Route 100 from Alton to Grafton...take the Grafton Ferry across the Illinois River to Calhoun County and take County Highway 1 through Brussels to Hardin; or continue past the Grafton Ferry at Grafton on Route 100, and continue on to Hardin through Jersey County on Route 100/16. Other great color drives are the Eldred Blacktop from Route 100/16 to Route 106; Route 100 from Hardin north to Milton, IL; and Route 100 from Hardin north to Kampsville; Route 96 west from Kampsville through Mozier, and then Route 96 north all of the way to Interstate 36/72.

The colors for the Great River Road from Alton to Eldred are just starting to show good colors, while the oaks are still largely green; the maples sumacs and sassafras are all showing good reds, oranges and yellows. Additionally the white ash are developing good purples, the hickories, cottonwoods and green ash have good yellows. The roadsides are full of goldenrods and trumpet creepers with good colors.

Trees are close to peak color in McDonough County. However, there are a lot of oaks that have not turned yet. Sassafras are in full glory now with lots of reds and orange. Maples are not as spectacular this year - most are turning or have turned yellow. Not many oranges/reds on the maples, but still pretty and there are some scattered trees that are red/orange. While there is a lot of color in the woods this week, leaves are falling.

Central

Color has peaked in Mason County. Orange, yellow and reds are prominent. Leaves are starting to fall.

Color is still changing rapidly and the oaks are starting to do some turning – mostly yellow to browns with scattered trees with red color. Many maples have full canopies in change with some showing

excellent reds and orange mixed into the yellows. Although not common in the Starved Rock area, sassafras is showing some great orange color now. Another less common understory tree is paw paw. They are easy to see now with large yellow leaves. Look for them along the west entrance of Starved Rock. Many of the hackberries and redbuds have turned from yellow to brown, and leaves are falling fast. Sycamores seem to be turning fast from yellow to brown, dropping their big leaves, exposing their greenish white upper trunks and limbs against the backdrop of the surrounding woodlands. Look for them in lower positions on the landscape, often along drainage ravines and river terraces. Sumacs continue to display some of the best dark reds in the foliar landscape right now. Bush honeysuckle is showing bright red berries now, and high-bush cranberry has hanging clumps of red to dark red fruit. With the good weather, farm harvest is still extremely active with lots of large machinery and grain haulers moving everywhere. Watch out for our farmers on fall color drives! Show them your appreciation for producing our nation's food by slowing down and giving them plenty of room to pass, both for their safety and yours. This will most likely be the last good weekend for visitors to see the beautiful colors of autumn at Starved Rock.

East Central

Still seeing the hickories and maples displaying orange and yellow, even though many of the hickories that had turned are now brown, and maples that had turned have dropped some of those leaves. The red and white oaks are slow to join in with fall colors in Coles County.

South

Last week's rain knocked off leaves in Clinton County. However, the sassafras still are showing some fall colors, the sumac are still holding on to some red leaves, and the sweet gum are turning yellow and some red in parts of the crowns. The red maples are turning more red, and the sugar maple and hickory are turning more yellow.

The fall colors have greatly improved over the last couple weeks in the Marion County area. Hickories have really begun to turn, showing yellows and bronze. Sumacs seem to be holding leaves longer than normal this year, showing vibrant red pigment. Sassafras and dogwoods are wonderful this fall, showing deep reds with some yellow for contrast. Persimmons have dropped many leaves in several areas, but continue to hold orange fruits that contrast well on the forest edges. Sugar maples are slowly continuing to turn deeper in the woods showing orange and red coloration. Some white ash are still holding on to deep purple leaves, while others have dropped the majority of their leaves. Green ash have the same story, with leaves still present being glowing yellow but most have dropped with heavy rain and wind events the middle of last week. Black oaks are beginning to turn yellowish orange, while white oaks have begun to turn to a dark red color. Great weather to enjoy the colors on a walk in the timber, or a sit in the deer stand!

Still no frost and the leaves are hanging on in Wayne County. Colors continue to progress with delightful changes this week. There is plenty of yellow now with hickories and oaks changing. The hickories will be pretty for several days before they go to brown. Be out early in the morning or in the evening to catch the golden highlights that are coming on in the oak timber. Believe it or not, sumac and sassafras

are still colorful. Even white pine is adding a splash of yellow with its old needles hanging on for an unusually long time this fall. Don't put off going for a tour, as the coming frost will bring down the leaves.

The oaks are still largely green, but hickories are turning their usual browns and yellows. Mulberry is bright yellow but leaves are falling fast. The early turners like dogwood, sassafras and sumac (all red) are peaking and beginning to lose leaves. Sugar maples are in color (pastels of red and yellow). Many of the ash are devoid of leaves already. Probably peak color will be a week to ten days in Randolph County. Car rides along the Great River Road should be very nice.

The fall colors are still looking great in Southern Illinois' Union County. There is a great deal of yellow/orange/red in the woods. The maples, sycamore, tulip poplar, sumacs, and others have turned and are starting to drop their leaves. The oaks are changing as well, displaying yellow, gold, and red colors. The oaks are continuing to change. Colors should stay for a while without heavy rains or winds. It's a great time to be outdoors in southern Illinois!

It seems as if the fall color has been put on hold in at Giant City State Park in Southern Illinois. Trees are still showing a lot of green. Sassafras trees and some of the maples are showing a few tinges of bright yellows and reds.

At the Cache River State Natural Area in Johnson County, an expanse of oak-hickory trees is still mainly green in color, with late color change this year. Some as the box elder, ash, walnut, and sycamore trees didn't show much color, with leaves turning brown and falling. Sassafras has some color all over, but not as bright as some years. Sumac and black gum have good color, but are not holding leaves long after changing. The colors are really starting to show up at Fort Massac State Park in Metropolis, with a lot of orange and yellows throughout the park.

FAQ's

Why do the leaves change color?

As autumn begins, days get shorter and this signals the tree to go dormant. There is not enough light or water in the winter for trees to photosynthesize (make food) so they shed their leaves and rest. The first step in dormancy is shutting down the food making factories in the leaves, green chlorophyll, and when green chlorophyll breaks down it exposes other colors in the leaves like yellows and reds that we could not previously see.

What causes some leaves to be red and some to be yellow?

The yellows and reds that are unmasked when green chlorophyll breaks down are pigments called carotenoids (yellow pigment that gives corn and carrots their color) and anthocyanins (red pigments that give blueberries and strawberries their color).

When will peak foliage happen?

The peak of fall color in Illinois normally occurs by mid-October in northern and central Illinois and by late October or early November in the southern third of the state.

Species and color expectations

Oak –red-orange

Hickory – golden bronze

Sugar maple – orange-red

Black maple – glowing yellow

Aspen – golden yellow

Tulip poplar – golden yellow

Dogwood – purplish red

Sumac – bright red

Virginia creeper – flaming red



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